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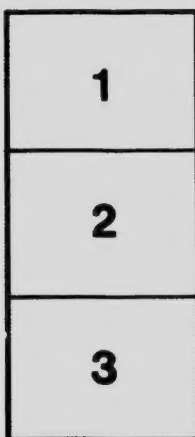
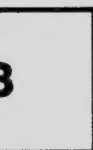
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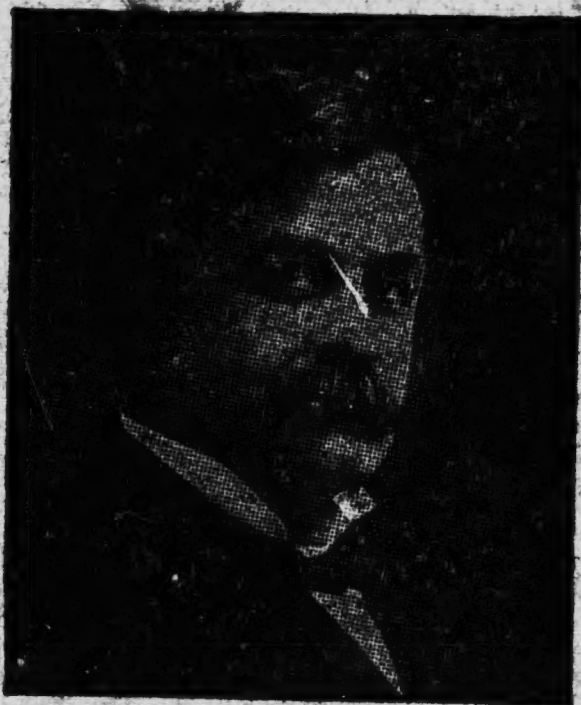
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THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE



BY
DR. JAMES L. GORDON, D.D.

Author of
"All's Love, Yet All's Law"

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle

“Search the long annals of proud Rome
and Greece,

The tombs of war. The chronicles of
peace.

Ransack the old and modern rolls of
fame.

To fit the brightest splendor on a name
The name above all names is

MOTHER.”

The greatest word is GOD. The
deepest word is SOUL. The longest
word is ETERNITY. The swiftest
word is TIME. The nearest word is
NOW. The darkest word is SIN. The
meanest word is HYPOCRICY. The
broadest word is TRUTH. The
strongest word is RIGHT. The ten-
derest word is LOVE. The sweetest
word is HOME. The dearest word is
MOTHER.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps used to say
that “everybody’s mother is a remark-
able woman.” In that sentence you
may find a kind criticism and a great
compliment. There is no human name
so enshrined in humanity’s affection
like the name of mother. Everything,
for most of us, which is sweet, beauti-
ful, lovely and holy, clusters about that
name. Think of mother and you think
of home. Think of home and you think
of the Bible. Think of the Bible and
you think of Christ. Think of Christ
and you think of God. To many a
youth and maiden a thousand miles

away from home, the name of mother has the value of religion, pure and undefiled, and enshrined in a living personality. Mother and Home are the tenderest notes on the keyboard of the human heart. Woe to the man who does not respond to the music of those two words.

One of the most important chapters of history has yet to be written. It will be entitled "A Mother's Influence." Who will write that wonderful story? The two brightest names in modern history are LINCOLN and CROMWELL. Lincoln affirmed "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother." Concerning the mother of Oliver Cromwell, the historian says: "No other member of his family, neither his wife or father, influenced him as did his mother. He followed her advice when young, he established her in the royal palace of Whitehall when he came to greatness, and when she died he buried her in Westminster Abbey." A plain, robust, substantial character she must have been, for, the historian adds, "She cared nothing for her son's grandeur." Her only thought seemed to be for his welfare and comfort and the honour of his name and reputation.

From the mother of Augustine to the mother of John Wesley, and from the mother of John Wesley to Victoria, the mother of Edward VII., the story of Christian motherhood has been the brightest thing on the page of history. Henry Ward Beecher, whose mother died when he was three years old, said: "No devout Roman Catholic ever saw so much in the Virgin Mary as I beheld in the childhood vision and memory's dream of my sainted mother." That

angel form was ever present in the life of the great preacher. She haunted his thoughts in youth. She hovered over the study hours of his maturity. She lingered near the sacred desk as her famous son entered the Holy of Holies in the hour of prayer and petition. She stood by him in the moments of his fierce oratorical conflicts when he stood before angry mobs and opposing elements. I sometimes think that the sweetest mother is an angel mother—a mother who has passed over the Jordan flood, and for whom we wear the white flower of a never fading memory.

James G. Blaine, the famous American statesman, doted upon the fond memory of his mother. He says, "The last message my mother left, in her conscious moments, was for me. The last words she uttered was my name." Daniel O'Connell, the magnificent Irish orator, when he first heard of the institution of slavery, exclaimed: "When first I heard of the idea of property in man, it sounded to me as if some one was trampling upon my mother's grave!" What a telling comparison plucked from the wing of memory! What an eloquent tribute to the one whose revered remains rested in that grave! This chain of sacred contributions, like a necklace of jewels, like a rosary of fond memories, like the glittering flash of an ever recurring thought, like a thing of beauty forever, runs through all the pages of history and biography. How poor the man who has never felt the pressure of a mother's kiss and in the corridors of whose memory there lingers no sound or echo of a mother's voice.

The first university is the university

of the home. Here the hours for recitation are—the Morning, the Noon and the Night. Here we find the Round Table of infancy and childhood. Here are discussed the problems of the present hour and the possibilities of coming years. Here sit the scholars of youth and maidenhood. Here are enthroned two great chairs—endowed by destiny and sustained by human affection—Fatherhood and Motherhood. The greatest university in the world is the home. Said George Herbert: “One good mother is worth one hundred school masters.”

The Home! Here the child begins the study of nature and human nature. Between the two heads of the table what a vast territory for the inspection of infant eyes and dissection of youthful hands. Was ever a boy born blind or a girl born who could not see? The most sensitive thing in the universe is the soul of a little child. What impressions are being made on the camera of childhood! A man's biography should be written by his own children. James H. Stoddard, the famous actor, in reverting to certain youthful memories, remarked: “My poor mother generally looked on the dark side of things, while my father was extravagantly optimistic.” And so a wise providence has arranged it, that in the home life, all human characteristics should meet, and all human eccentricities should find a proper balance. Youth and age, ignorance and experience, courage and caution, hope and fear, the spirit of conservation and the spirit of aggression, all find their co-ordination in the home life.

Those were tragic words of Thomas Paine—“The first five years of my life made me an infidel!” Where was the

fault? Was it with father or mother? As a rule the mothers have been on the right side. John Randolph, the Southern statesman, wrote: "I should have been an atheist if it had not been for one recollection, namely, the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers, and on bended knees, taught me to say, 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'" Robert G. Ingersoll, the eloquent agnostic orator, acknowledged, publicly, the many criticisms credited to him, concerning his father, who was a Congregational preacher of narrow views and unreasonable prejudices; but even though challenged again and again by T. DeWitt Talmage and other well-known American divines, he never questioned, in public or private, the Christian character and consistency of his mother's life.

"What have you left now?" said an agnostic to a young man after he had listened to a brilliant oration by the most eloquent infidel advocate of the present generation—"What have you left now?" The young man's answer was expressed in three words: "MY MOTHER'S LIFE!"

Said one friend to another: "Which translation of the Bible do you prefer—the authorized version, the revised, or the American?" His answer was: "I prefer my mother's translation!" His mother had made the doctrines of the New Testament real, vital and substantial. Her life had been an incarnation of Christian ideals.

The greatest letters ever written, measured by their influence, were written by a mother's hand. These are the genuine love letters of the world. Writ-

ten in the red ink of human affection, baptized with the tears of spiritual anxiety, and caressed by the hands of an unselfish devotion. No wonder the young lad from the country said that he found three things in his mother's letter: Money, Love and Tears. This is the trinity of a mother's love made manifest.

A mother whose name has passed into history, once wrote to her boy, saying: "If you could see me kissing your picture and then, after awhile, taking it up again, and, with tears in my eyes, calling you 'My Beloved Son,' you would comprehend what it costs me, sometimes, to use the stern language of authority and even to occasion you moments of pain."

The mightiest prayers ever offered have ascended from a mother's lips. "My mother's prayers haunt me like a ghost!" said the conscious stricken sailor when slipping down the ratlines one night as though stung into nervousness by an unwelcome thought. "I knew that my mother would be praying for me" said one who became a famous American bishop. "I knew that my mother would be praying for me—and it helped me!"

The swiftest thing in the universe is a mother's prayer. From London to Edinburgh in a flash! From Montreal to Winnipeg in a flash! From Winnipeg to Vancouver in a flash! Oh, what a wonderful arrow of light, tipped with fire, aflame with love, winged with faith and vibrating with spiritual force. A mother's prayer is a thought of love passing through the universal heart of God and on its way from soul to soul. I seem to hear the reply of the Bishop

of Hippo to the mother of Augustine, who came beseeching him to pray for her skeptical son—"Depart, good woman," said he, "the child of so many prayers can not be lost!"

The greatest sacrifices for the church have been made by Christian mothers. Bishop Simpson was the only son of a widowed mother, and when as a young man, he felt called upon, with a great fear and embarrassment, to inform his mother that he must leave home for a period of years in order to study for the ministry; so great was his hesitation that he remarked in recalling the event: "I feared it might almost break her heart to propose it." But the mother was not surprised nor disturbed. This was her answer. "My son, I have been looking for this hour ever since you were born!"

There is no influence in the world, to-day, like the influence of a Christian mother. No better illustration of that fact can be given than the following brief paragraph from a popular periodical: "Howard J. Wethmer, of Pittsburgh, U.S., has received through the mails his gold watch, which was stolen while he was on a visit to his father's home, Blossburg, some weeks ago. The watch bore the inscription 'From Mother to Howard, August 1, 1892, on his twenty-fourth birthday.' In returning the watch the burglar writes: 'I am sorry I caused the owner of this watch worry and anxiety. It was taken when I happened to drop in on your father's farm some time ago. The word 'Mother' appeals to me, and I am prompted to return it to you because it is your mother's gift.'" Mr. Wethmer declares if the burglar will only make

himself known to him, he will not only refuse to turn him over to the authorities, but will buy him a gold watch for himself."

No class of persons in the world have tested the power of a consecrated life like the mothers of Christendom. The mother of Alfred Tyng was distinguished for force of character and wonderful faith in God. When gasping for breath, in her dying hour she heard her husband express some anxiety about the future welfare of their children and this was her confident reply: "My dear, give yourself no uneasiness about my children, God will bring them all to himself; this is His covenant with me." This woman was on speaking terms with God. She knew what Jehovah was going to do. He had taken her into His confidence. The secret of the Lord was with her. There are mothers who know more about God by an actual experience than certain divinity students who have stood behind the sacred desk for years. They are adepts in the psychology of the soul. They have a science of religion which is all their own. They wear a crown of prophecy; and power belongs to them.

One of the greatest compliments ever paid to a mother was expressed in these words: "She understands me!" Who understands a boy like his mother? There was only one person in the world who understood Thomas Carlyle—and that was his mother. "If he would only be satisfied," said his mother, "but I have learned that when he does not find fault he is pleased, and that has to content me." That mother understood her boy, and learned to write when she was over seventy years of

age, in order that she might correspond with her son who had now become famous. Small wonder that in his last years he exclaimed: "No able man ever had a fool for a mother."

When fifty-eight years old Carlyle wrote the following beautiful epistle to his aged mother:—

"Dear old mother, weak and sick and dear to me, what a day this has been in my solitary thoughts! For, except a few words to Jane, I have not spoken to anyone, nor, indeed, hardly seen anyone, it being dusk and dark before I went out—a dim, silent Sabbath day, the sky foggy, dark with damp, and a universal stillness the consequence, and it is this day gone fifty-eight years that I was born. And my poor mother! Well, we are all in God's hands, surely God is good. Surely we ought to trust Him, or what is there for the sons of men? O, my dear mother, let it ever be a comfort to you, however weak you are, that you did your part honorably and well while in strength, and were a noble mother to me, and to us all. I am now myself grown old, and have various things to do and suffer for so many years, that there is nothing I ever had to be so much thankful for as the mother I had. That is a truth which I know well and perhaps this day again it may be some comfort to you. Yes, surely, for, if there has been any good in the things I have uttered in the world's hearing, it was your voice essentially that was speaking through me, essentially what you and my brave father meant and taught me to mean, this was the purport of all I spoke and wrote. And if in the few years that may remain me I am to get any more

written for the world, the essence of it, so far as it is worthy and good, will still be yours."

"May God reward you, dearest mother, for all you have done for me. I never can. Ah, no, but will think of it with gratitude and pious love so long as I have the power of thinking and I will pray God's blessing on you now and always."

And when the mother of Thomas Carlyle was gone from earth forever, how lonely was this strange and sad philosopher. How earnestly he could have breathed a prayer in the language of the following pathetic lines:—

"Mother, come back from yon echoless shore,

Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,

Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep."

There is only one absolutely unselfish and God-like love. It is a mother's love. A mother's love is the best illustration of God's love. A mother's love is the best guarantee of God's love. The God who can create a mother, must possess a mother's heart. God is Love, and Love is the mother heart of God. Theodore Parker was the first and, so far as I know, the only preacher who, in his public prayers, addressed God as "The Father and Mother of us all." Oh, my friend, read your theology beneath the candle light of a mother's love. That theology is hard, cold, stern and unbending which cannot find a place in the heart of a mother. Oh happy phrase "The mother heart of God!" And let us thank Kipling, too,

for those glorious lines, fit for the monument of a great soul:—

“If I were hanged on the highest hill
I know whose love would follow me
still;

If I were drowned in the deepest sea
I know whose tears would come down
to me;

If I were damned in body and soul
I know whose prayers would make me
whole,

Mother o' mine! Mother o' mine!”

And if, this morning, in passing out from the scenes of holy joy and heavenly association, you should find, on your homeward journey, some poor besotted, sin-cursed prodigal—shunned by man and forsaken by God—Nay, not forsaken by God, for God has never forsaken a soul created by the breath of His power—If some poor wandering child of Time should stagger across your path, I beseech you, remember, that—

“No matter how wayward his footsteps have been,

No matter how deeply he's sunken in sin,

No matter how low is his standard of joy,

Though drunken and loathsome—

HE'S SOME MOTHER'S BOY.”

Is there any love on earth which will equal a mother's devotion? I quote: “Mr. Gladstone gave in Parliament, when announcing the death of Princess Alice, a touching story of sick-room ministration. The Princess' little boy was ill with diphtheria; the physician had cautioned her not to inhale the poisoned breath; the child was tossing

in the delirium of fever. The mother took the little one in her lap and stroked his fevered brow; the boy threw his arms around her neck, and whispered, "Kiss me, mamma;" the mother's instinct was stronger than the physician's caution; she pressed her lips to the child's, but lost her life."

* * * *

Oh glorious memory! Star-lit memory! Memory aflame with a thousand thoughts—Memory and memories—Memories of home, memories of the fireside, memories of the vesper hymn, memories of a mother's voice, memories of a mother's hand, memories of a mother's good-night kiss, memories of a last farewell, memories of the green sod—memories—memories—sweetest music of the past. Listen to the tribute of a loyal heart: "The old perfume, preferred by her, with which my mother was wont to touch her handkerchief when I was a boy, is as distinct to memory now as to my sense perception then, yet no more definite than the subtle aroma and bouquet of her personality, a spirit-perfume defying description or analysis, which is with me still as when her immediate presence diffused it here, though thirty years have passed since she added her fine fragrance to the aggregated sweetness of heaven."

I have been out at eventime

Beneath a moonlight sky of spring,
When earth was garnished like a bride,
And night had on her silver wing;
When bursting leaves and diamond
grass

And waters leaping to the light,

And all that makes the pulses pass
With wilder fleetness, thronged the
night;

When all was beauty—then have I,
With friends on whom my love is
flung

Like myrrh on wings of Araby,
Gazed up where evening lamp is
hung;

And when the beautiful spirit there
Flung over me its golden chain,
My mother's voice came on the air,
Like the light droppings of the rain,
And resting on some silver star

The spirit of a bended knee,
I've poured her low and fervent prayer
That our eternity might be,
To rise in heaven like stars at night
And tread a living path of light.

Young man, I appeal to you in the
words of a brave soul, when I quote,
for your inspiration, the following lines
written by a queenly hand:—It seems
to me if I were a boy with a mother, I
would let my right hand forget its cunning,
and my left hand forget its nerve
and might, before I would let my mother's
hope in me, my mother's belief in
me and my mother's expectation for me,
die."





MOTHER'S GOOD-BYE.

"Sit down by the side of your mother, my boy,
You have only a moment I know,
But you'll wait till I give you my parting advice,
'Tis all that I have to bestow.

You leave us to seek for employment, my boy,
By the world you have yet to be tried,
But in the temptations and struggles you meet,
May your heart in the Saviour confide.

"You'll find in your satchel a Bible, my boy,
'Tis the book of all others the best,
It will teach you to live, it will help you to die,
And lead to the gates of the blest.
I gave you to God in your cradle, my boy,
I have taught you the best that I knew;
But as long as God's mercy permits me to live,
I shall never cease praying for you.

"Your father is coming to bid you good-bye,
Oh, how lonely and sad we shall be,
But when far from the scenes of your childhood
and youth,

You'll think of your father and me.
I want you to feel every word I have said,
For it came from the depths of my love,
And, my boy, should we never behold you on
earth,

Will you promise to meet us above?

"Hold fast to the right, hold fast to the right,
Wherever your footsteps may roam.
Oh, forsake not the way of Salvation, my boy,
That you learned from your mother at home."

